

**Mapping Earth's Surface** ▪ *Skills Lab*

## A Borderline Case

When traveling from one state to another, you may have wondered how people first decided where to locate the borders between states.

**Problem**

Which was more important in determining state borders: lines of latitude and longitude or physical features?

**Skills Focus**

classifying, observing, inferring

**Materials**

United States map with latitude, longitude, and state borders

tracing paper

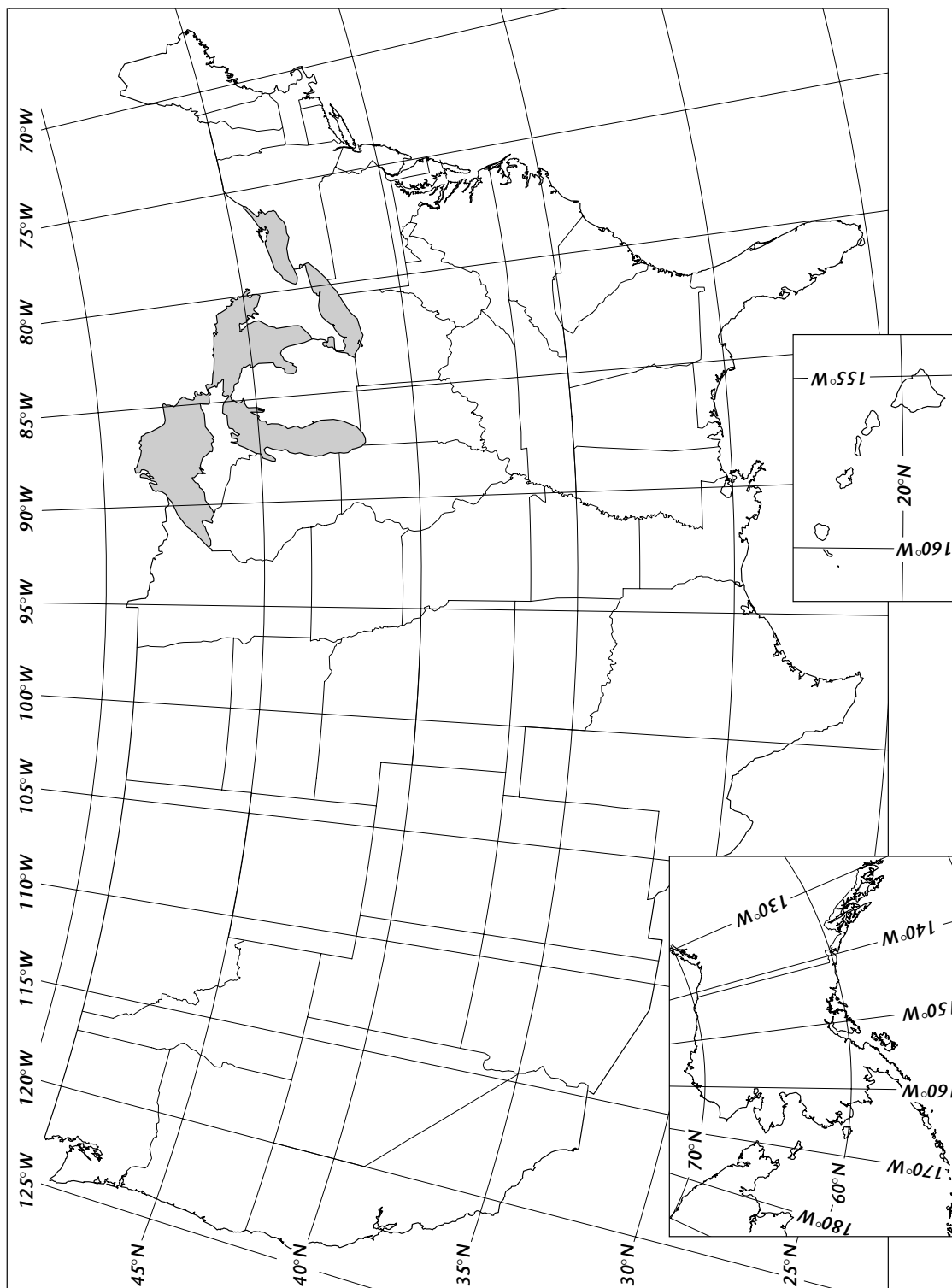
paper clips

colored pencils

**Procedure**

1. Lay a sheet of tracing paper on top of the map of the United States.
2. Trace over the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of the United States with a blue pencil.
3. Using the blue pencil, trace all Great Lakes shorelines that reach nearby states.
4. Trace all state borders that go exactly north-south with a red pencil. (*Hint:* Some straight-line borders that appear to run north-south, such as the western border of Maine, do not follow lines of longitude.)
5. Use a green pencil to trace all state borders or sections of state borders that go exactly east-west. (*Hint:* Straight-line borders that are slanted, such as the southern border of Nevada, do not follow lines of latitude.)
6. Now use a blue pencil to trace the borders that follow rivers.
7. Use a brown pencil to trace any borders that are not straight lines or rivers.

# Mapping Earth's Surface ▪ Skills Lab



**Mapping Earth's Surface** ▪ *Skills Lab***A Borderline Case** *(continued)***Analyze and Conclude**

*Write your answers in the spaces provided.*

1. **Classifying** How many state boundaries are completely defined by longitude and latitude? How many are partially defined by longitude and latitude? How many states do not use either one to define their borders?

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2. **Observing** What feature is most often used to define a state border when longitude and latitude are not used? Give examples of specific states.

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3. **Observing** Study the physical map of the United States in Appendix A in your textbook. What other physical features are used to define borders? Which state borders are defined by these features?

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4. **Inferring** In which region of the country were lines of latitude and longitude most important in determining state borders? What do you think is the reason for this?

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5. **Communicating** Pick any state and describe its borders as accurately as you can in terms of latitude and longitude and physical features.

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**More to Explore**

Research the history of your state to find out when and how its borders were established. Are your state's borders based on longitude and latitude, landforms and topography, or both?

Review a map of your county or state. Are any features other than borders related to longitude and latitude? Which features seem to follow landforms and topography?